

THE BEACON



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APRIL 15 TORNADO, GAGE COUNTY NEBRASKA

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(Photo by Shane Adams)

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency

MARCH-APRIL 2006



11/29/2005

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LATE SNOWSTORM USHERS SPRING IN WITH HEAVY DRIFTING ONSLAUGHT

As Spring was making its official appearance, and plans were being made to address thunderstorms and tornados for Severe Weather Awareness Week, nature pulled a fast one and dumped up to two feet of snow on Nebraska and the Midwest. Schools were closed in hundreds of communities throughout Nebraska, South Dakota, Colorado and Kansas, and the storm was blamed for at least five deaths.

Interstate highways and state roads were closed in all four states. In Nebraska, portions of Interstate 80 were closed and motorists looked for local hospitality to ride out the storm.

Only 6 to 11 inches were recorded officially in Omaha, but portions of east-central Nebraska received much heavier doses. Greeley, Nebraska officially showed 25 inches of snowfall, and Hastings reported an official 20.3



Region 26 emergency Manager Alma Beland found that there was shovelin' to be done before she could get into her office. After a chance to warm up, it'll be time to dig that vehicle out.

inches in a 48-hour period. Lincoln logged anywhere from 9 to 14.5 inches, and Norfolk reported 15.6 inches.

More crippling than the official accumulation, however, was the result of the high winds that accompanied the storm. Drifts of 10 to 12 feet clogged roads and cities, and power lines went down over wide areas.

On the cover...

Scenes like this are the norm for the winter issues of The BEACON, but in March we're supposed to be gearing up for thunderstorms, tornados and other severe spring weather. One last onslaught as the calendar turned to spring, however, provided snow-clogged vistas. This photo comes from the area of the Loup/Rock County border.

ROLES CHANGING AT ALL LEVELS OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT/HOMELAND SECURITY

This past week, NAEM held their annual convention in North Platte. Unfortunately I was unable to make the convention because of the birth of our grandson. Mr. Henry Tamasi, Training Supervisor for the Agency, presented the following talk for me at the convention. I felt it was important to present to everyone that did not have the pleasure of attending the meeting.

“Now that Henry is standing up here in my stead, suffice it to say, I am sorry I was not able to appear today and speak, hopefully he represents me well. I have often said to the staff members, family comes first and this weekend I am in Kansas City as our daughter had our 2nd grandchild. I am very grateful that Henry has agreed to bring a message to each of you on my behalf. Today I want Henry to take a little time and talk about where we are at as a State as we continue to travel down the emergency management/homeland security road together. If there is one message that has come out loud and clear over the course of the past several years, nothing will stay the same within DHS; change will be the order of the day. Change is what we are now seeing with the FY2006 program from what we experienced in the FY2005 program and all indications are the process will change again for FY2007.

As we transcend into the 2006 program, many of you here had the opportunity to come to Mahoney State Park and participate in the development of the 2006 Investment Justifications for funding under the HSGP, the LETPP, MMR, and Citizen Corps programs. Again we have one application for each of the funding streams. We were fortunate this year to have the EMPG grant application process separate away from the rest of the grant programs. NEMA is currently in the process of making the final allocation decisions for the 2006 program and these will be release before the end of the month.

This year we had to develop a Program and Capability Enhancement Plan as well as the Investment Justification for the State HSGP application. The Ca-

pability enhancement Plan is a multi-year management plan for the entire state homeland security program that looks beyond just grant and training programs and funding and takes a more holistic approach to long term planning, training, exercising and equipment program sustainability. The Investment Justifications process looks at approaches the State and local jurisdictions will take towards achieving initiatives noted in the enhancement and capability plan through all funding available either through the Federal programs, State funds and local funds. As has been noted many times previously and needs to continually be said, funding and programs will be build upon the basis of risk, threat and need. What we are trying to achieve is the addressing of specific priorities identified at the State and local level on the basis of risk, threat and need. With the release of the FY2006 program, we know ultimately all States are not equal—some are more equal than others. The same applies at the local level; this can be seen through risk and needs assessments, looking at demographic, critical infrastructure and determining what target capabilities are truly needed. This puts into focus for the need to approach programming on a regional basis for planning, training, exercising and equipment allocations. NEMA completed and submitted the State's Program and Capability Enhance-



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ment Plan and the Investment Justifications on the 2nd of March. At the end of April there will be application workshops conducted across the State that will give the electronic format for the applications and also will provide the Investment Justifications the local submittals will need to support. The expectation is the applications will tentatively be submitted to NEMA by the end of May. This will allow the State approx. 2 months to process, take to the Homeland Security Policy Group and then to the Governor for approval. I do not expect allocations being made at the local level until approx. August of 2005.

It is important to try and focus on the overall goal of the Department of Homeland Security instead of focusing in upon the minutiae of each grant program. Hopefully when the application process and final allocations are completed we will have addressed our State Plan/strategy, addressed key national priorities, target capabilities, regionalization, collaboration and sustainability of program at the State/local level.

As a result of the Communication Conference and the Exercise and Planning workshop in North Platte this past January, several questions have arisen in regards to some of the information put out at the conference. Henry is going to take a little time and try and put into focus the “overall” meaning and intent of the conference and regionalization. Hopefully this will allay some fears, clarify some questions and provide a direct focus as we traverse the emergency management homeland security road together.

One of the “mandates” coming to NEMA as administrative agency for the homeland security grants is to be able to articulate the formation of “regions” for grant and program purposes to show how we are targeting support to broad based solutions instead of attempting to give every juris-

diction the same capabilities. At the State level, we also recognize there is no way short of either a legislative mandate or on a funding basis that we can make local jurisdictions enter into inter-local agreements or MOU’s forming regions; this must be done at the local level. The Division of Communications and NEMA, formed a map on the basis of communications capabilities and geography; called them areas of common interests to recognize this commonality and put focus to how grant funds were targeted on a comprehensive basis, thus addressing this Federal requirement.

The map shown in North Platte at the communications conference was a map showing “areas of common interest” and was not done on the basis of who should be in with whom for strictly communication purposes. We recognize as clearer focus comes to the communications systems, either MOU’s or inter-local agreements will be entered into between counties to form the most economically feasible and supportive systems. We also recognize as State agencies upgrade communication capabilities, as a peer region, they will integrate into the locally established systems.

The focus of the map was actually multi-faceted on the part of NEMA and the State and much broader in scope than just communications; hopefully the following will provide clarity:

- Regionalization needs to be shown to the Department of Homeland Security demonstrating how the State is organizing at the local level for planning, exercising and training (PET) as well as for overall management of the grant.
- DHS has thus far been accepting of “areas of common interest” recognizing that it is hard to mandate regions.
- Using these NEMA/DOC identified

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regions as a basis, these could/would be used to hold regional area meetings to develop the training and exercising calendars that are reflective on a broad basis activities in all counties.

- NEMA does not have the personnel and resources to hold these meetings in all 93 counties and these identified areas give us the ability to focus our activities and program.

Thus I, we, Henry, the Lt. Governor respectfully ask you understand the following;

- These identified regions are for administrative purposes within NEMA and the overall State Homeland Security Program and address the DHS “regionalization” mandate.
- These regions are reflective of “neighboring counties” on all sides of your counties.
- It needs to be articulated rather clearly that nothing in the above precluded any county from submitting a separate PET calendar in a more detailed fashion, entering into agreements with any other county, submit grant applications at the county level and/or entering into communications projects. FY2006 applications are still only being accepted at the individual county level. However, and Henry stresses, all applications must be reflective of the neighboring counties and how on a “regional” basis the grant support would be broad based for homeland security/emergency management purposes, support the State Program and Capability Plan/Investment Justifications.

We at the State level know the “communications map” of “who” is actually is aligned with “whom” will be defined over time as capabilities are upgraded, MOU’s are signed and the communication regions

are fleshed out at the local level and integration is obtained with the State. We ask that one realizes NEMA must be able to demonstrate on a basis how we are aligning counties to look comprehensively at the entire spectrum of homeland security/emergency management activities.

As an Agency, NEMA has been very busy with the work of writing/updating the State Strategy, the Enhancement Plan and the Investment Justifications. With the submittal at the Federal level, the program moves in another direction with the rolling out of the local application process. NEMA recently completed both the annual program review of the State homeland security grant program as well as the Catastrophic Evacuation Plan for the State, Lincoln and Omaha. Recently NEMA personnel participated in a conference call with DHS and had the inception of a new program laid out based upon the Target Capabilities List. It appears that DHS will be entering into a multi-phased process doing an assessment of the State’s ability to meet the Target Capabilities List culminating with an exercise based upon the TCL’s and the State’s current Capabilities. NIMS continues to be a program that is growing exponentially with new initiatives involving resource typing and credentialing moving forward. Each of you should be busy moving the program forward within your affected jurisdictions as we come closer to the self certification process for NIMS. In addition, we anticipate the release of the National Infrastructure Protection Program Plan within the next couple of months and ultimately this will have direct ramifications at the local level when there become mandates on how to integrate into and support.

If you have followed very closely what has been said thus far by Henry, it is not very hard to understand that what we have traditionally known as emergency management has been overtaken by this

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whole concept of “homeland security”. What in the past we have known as the 4 phases of emergency management-response, recovery, mitigation and preparedness-has now been overshadowed by the four mission areas of the National Preparedness Goal-Prevent, Protect, Respond and Recover with Mitigation as an implied mission areas under Recover. This really is a trend that has disturbed me over the course of the past couple of years when one takes a look at NEMA and the activities we carry out on a day to day basis. I have been spending quite a bit of time doing an administrative overview of the Agency recently and have determined that approx. 60% of our time that we used to devote to emergency management is now taken by those duties we call homeland security. One of my fears is this inattention to detail involving our traditional emergency management duties will come back to haunt us should a larger disaster strike us. I would urge each of you to be asking this question of yourselves and your communities and start having an honest conversation with your elected officials.

Legislatively there are some changes coming that directly affect NEMA and will ultimately have a local impact over time. With the passage of the Governor’s main-line budget bill, there is now a requirement NEMA provide a yearly report to the Appropriations Committee on the status of all homeland security funding within the State, the amounts of money given at the State and local jurisdictions level, what the funding has been used for and then a projection of future program and funding needs to sustain program. Senator Schmick has a bill moving through the Legislature currently that establishes the Department of Homeland Security within Nebraska and allows the Governor to appoint the director. This bill will also put 2 state senators on the Governor’s Home-

land Security Policy Group as Ex-officio members. The final bill that passed and was signed by the Governor gives NEMA the ability to establish a program to calibrate radiological instruments within the State. With the newer generation of monitoring equipment becoming available, the cost to send out of state would be cost-prohibitive and this allows NEMA to provide/charge for the service at a much lower rate. For jurisdictions with instruments this will mean paying a fee based upon the actual cost to keep the program supplied and the technician trained.

Since our last meeting we have experience 2 Federal disasters within our borders, central Nebraska flooding this past May and the recent ice and snow storm across the breadth of the State. Additionally we received a declaration for the receipt of Katrina evacuees within Omaha, Douglas County. As always these and other emergencies has shown our greatest asset is each other and our ability to come together, united for the common good of our State and communities. It is this spirit of cooperation and support that truly makes being an emergency manager one of the most satisfying professions there is. I wish to thank each of you for having the privilege of serving this past year as the Assistant Director of NEMA and having the pleasure of working for you.



F2 TORNADO SLAMS GAGE COUNTY LATE ON APRIL 15

Saturday afternoon, April 15 2006, looked threatening. The thunderstorms were right where the weather reports said they would be, and were intensifying. The NOAA's Storm Prediction Center had issued their forecast of the area of highest probability for a "significant" tornado on Saturday morning, and it was centered on Gage County.



This photo was taken near Wymore, Nebraska on April 15th, by Scott Johnson.

Then it happened, right on cue. A tornado formed six miles west of Wymore, first spotted at 4:28 p.m., and tracked northeast to about four miles east of downtown Beatrice. From there, it continued northeast, reaching its maximum strength of F2 on the Fujita Scale about five miles east-northeast of Beatrice. From there it continued into Johnson County, finally lifting three miles north of Sterling, about a mile south of the Johnson/Otoe County line.



Path of the April 15 2006 Gage County tornado.

All told, the twister was on the ground for a total of 34 miles and reached a maximum width of $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. Fortunately, the majority of the damage caused on the ground occurred along the portion of the tornado's path where its strength was rated as F0 or F1, and its width was only $\frac{1}{4}$ mile or less. In an F2 tornado, winds can reach 113 to 157 miles per hour, while an F0 is rated at wind speeds of 40 to 72 mph, and an F1 can involve winds of 73 to 112 mph.

Damage estimates are still incom-

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GAGE COUNTY TORNADO (CONTINUED)

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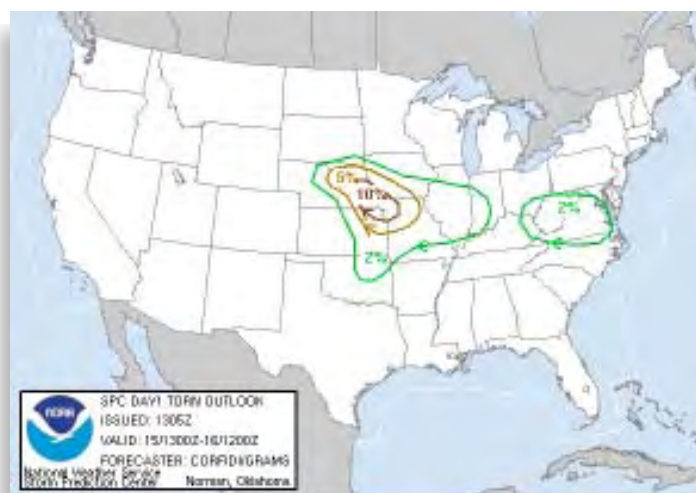
plete, with early estimates ranging from \$1 million upward. Gage County Emergency Management Director Mark Meints said that fortunately no injuries or deaths were reported. He said 73 homes were affected by the tornado - one was destroyed, two received major damage and the rest received repairable damage.

Tornados are rated based on the damage

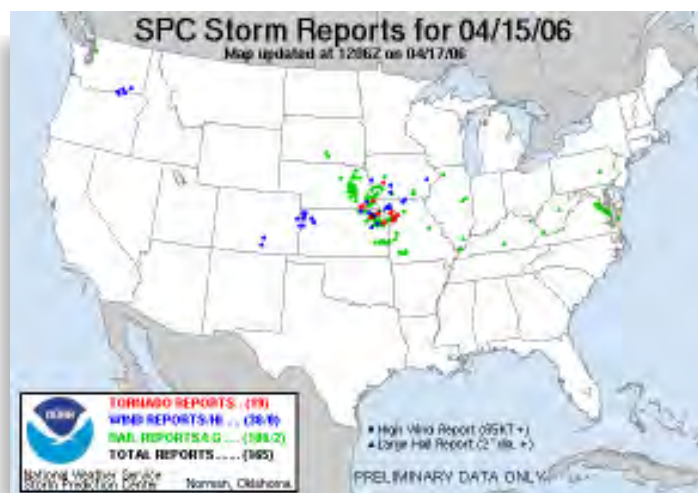
they cause. F2 strength on the Fujita scale means that the estimated winds in the tornado were between 113 and 157 mph.. This type of tornado can tear the roofs from frame houses, demolish mobile homes, overturn train cars, snap or up-root large trees and cause light objects to become missiles. Cars can also be lifted off the ground.

*For an account of the tornado damage and aftermath, visit the Beatrice, Nebraska **Daily Sun** newspaper site at:*

<http://www.beatricedailysun.com/articles/2006/04/17/news/news1.txt>.



The Tornado Probability Outlook for April 15 2006, issued by the National Weather Service's Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma.



Storms reported on April 15 2006. Note the accuracy of the predictions in the projection to the left.

NEW EMPLOYEES TAKE ON DUTIES AT N.E.M.A.

Mark Robertson brings emergency management experience with him to fill an Exercise Training Officer (ETO) slot at the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency. He logged six years in Training and Exercising with Ada County, Idaho and the State of Idaho. Born in Belton, MO, Mark took the long way around to Nebraska, and now brings his wife and two kids to Nebraska. His experience is a welcome addition to N.E.M.A. and he can now compare Nebraska fishing to the Idaho version. Carp's carp, no matter where you go.



Tami Freeman is the latest in a long string of S.O.S. employees who have found their way underground at 1300 Military Road. SOS is an on-call, in-house, State-operated temporary employment program, and many permanent N.E.M.A. regulars started out as S.O.S. employees. Tami is the Staff Assistant for the Training and Exercise Division, and is already well known to emergency managers and state employees involved in T&E in Nebraska. She's a Kearney native, but grew up in New York. Tami is an avid Yankees fan, and loves auto racing, but admits that she's "pursuing a dream in accounting".

Seth Hyberger is a self-described "Lancaster County Brat", born in Lincoln and growing up in Hickman and Waverly. He got his education at home, too, picking up a B.A. in Political Science and an M.A. in Community and Regional Planning from U.N.L. He also came into N.E.M.A. via the S.O.S. pipeline, entering the Exercise Training Officer slot he now occupies after having done a stint at the Health and Human Services System as a student intern working with the Nebraska Homeless Assistance Program. When he doesn't have his nose buried in a Homeland Security Guideline or some obscure planning tome, he reads mysteries and runs for pleasure.



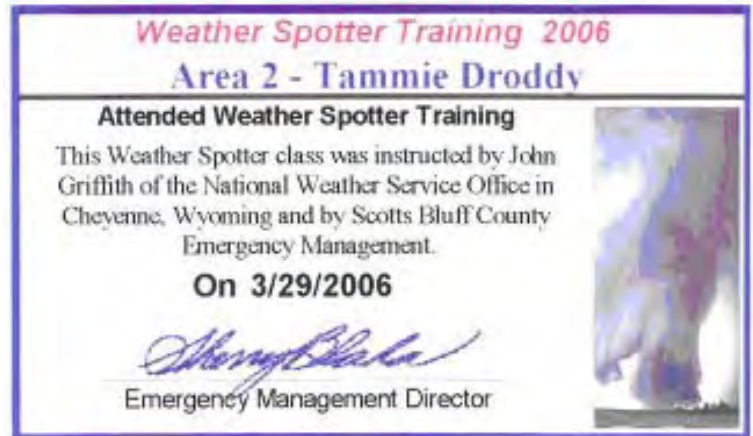
SCOTTS BLUFF, BANNER COUNTIES HOLD TRAINING COURSE FOR WEATHER SPOTTERS

By Sherry Blaha

Scotts Bluff and Banner County Emergency Management held their Annual Weather Spotter Training on March 29th.

A total of 165 Certificates of Attendance were given at the end of the program. John Griffith, Warning Coordination Meteorologist of the National Weather Service in Cheyenne, was the instructor. Every year the interested group gets larger.

Sherry Blaha stated that "Over the years, we have had to move it to newer locations to accomodate the large crowd. We now have it at the Gering Civic Center and we use two large rooms. Everyone loves to receive the Certificate of Attendance card that we issue. They carry it with them until they receive a new one the next year. We always invite the general public in addition to our regular spotters who are Law Enforcement, Fire Services, Media, Rural Spotters, Amateur Radio, and Citizen Corps."



The coveted Scotts Bluff Emergency Management spotter card.

Guest speakers from the North Platte Valley Chapter of the American Red Cross, Amateur Radio, and Citizen Corps/CERT spoke briefly about their organizations and invited new people to join them.

CUSTER COUNTY CONDUCTS PANDEMIC FLU TABLETOP

Custer County conducted a table top planning exercise and developed a county response plan for a Pandemic Flu outbreak.

Officials participating in the exercise included:

(Front row): Broken Bow Mayor Jim Franssen; Chief of Police Steve Scott, County Board member Tammy Kleebe; Health Dept. Nurse Julie Rother. Back Row: EAS Radio Station rep. Matt Goosey; Health Dept. Emergency Coordinator Angela Redman;

Hospital Emergency Coordinator Steve Osborn; County Board member Gerald Sloggett; Co. Red Cross rep. Sally McAbee; Co. Emergency Manager George Rhodes; Broken Bow School Superintendent, Dr. Tim Shafer; Nebraska State Patrol Sgt. Kirk Hansel; Sheriff Ted Henderson. Not pictured (they were taking the group photos) Volunteer Coordinator Carol Allen; and PIO Kerri Rempp.



POSTER WINNERS NAMED IN 2006

SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK CONTEST

Each spring, fourth graders across the state are invited to submit their entries for the annual Severe Weather Awareness Week poster contest. Sponsored jointly by the Nebraska Association of Emergency Management, the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and the National Weather Service, the contest is intended to foster awareness of the changeable and often dangerous nature of spring weather in Nebraska. Here are the winners for 2006.



First Place
Douglas Johnson
 Fairfield, NE
 Clay Center
 Public School
 Clay Center, NE



Third Place
Kylie Heaton • Clay Center
 Clay Center Public School, Clay Center, NE



Second Place
Cody Hoffa
 Wymore, NE
 Southern
 Elementary
 Blue Springs, NE



Fourth Place
Brittany Wolfram • Laurel, NE
 Laurel-Concord School, Laurel, NE



Fifth Place
Alexis Anderson • Hastings, NE
 Zion Lutheran, Hastings, NE

LATE MARCH STORM HITS STANTON COUNTY

Stanton County Emergency Management Director Sanford Goshorn reported damage from a severe storm that struck Stanton County March 30, but fortunately there were no injuries and no families were displaced.

Stanton Co EMGT had 4 units and 6 personnel working the storm damage. They found pieces and parts of buildings 1/4 mile from building site in fields in all different directions. The storm time was set at 1422 hrs, and total damages were estimated at \$275,000. Three farms were hit, and after investigation it was determined to be a cyclonic wind. There was no official tornado spotting, but the roar and the damage indicated a tornado-like wind.

Two semi trucks were blown off Highway 15. The first location was set on highway 15 four miles north of highway 91, involving \$164,000.00 damage. The second report was at highway 16 seven miles north of Pilger, estimated damage of \$36,000.00. Both drivers said it was "a gray wall that came from all different directions, and the next thing they knew they were on their tops and off the road".

At 82688 568 Ave. there was estimated damage of \$30,000.00 to a house. There was a report of siding gone, roof shingles missing, and four windows blown inward on two different side of the house. At 82641 568 Ave. there was estimated damage of \$35,000.00. Two grain bin tops were damaged, a metal outbuilding damaged, a windmill down and twisted, roof damage to two barns, and power lines down. The house was not damaged.

At 82480 567 Ave. there was an estimated \$10,000.00 worth of damage where a hog barn roof was torn off, a barn damaged, tree damage, and limb damage to outbuildings. Again, the house was not damaged.

PLATTE COUNTY REGISTERS VOLUNTEERS IN ADVANCE

A collaborative effort has been underway for a number of months to establish a means to provide individuals within Columbus, Platte County and the surrounding counties an opportunity to pre-register to volunteer to help in the event of a disaster or public health emergency. Based on input from the registration forms, individuals could also volunteer to help in additional United Way agencies. The agencies involved in this collaborative effort include The Columbus Area United Way, Prairie Valley Chapter of the Red Cross, East Central District Health Department, and Columbus/Platte County Emergency Management.

The involved organizations plan to setup sign up booths at various events in the area. A website has also been established with preparedness information, events calendar, and a sign up form at www.megavision.com/volunteer. Funding for brochures and website development was provided by a grant from the State Emergency Response Commission. For more information volunteers may contact any of the above-listed agencies.

BASIC ACADEMY PARTICIPANTS, MARCH 27-31 2006



TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

For a list of training offered by agencies other than N.E.M.A., visit the N.E.M.A. website at <http://www.nebema.org> and click the link for “News and Events”



This is a listing of N.E.M.A.-sponsored training activities. To download a brochure or to register for a course, please visit the N.E.M.A. website at <http://www.nema.ne.gov> and click the button titled "Register for a Training Class".

Training Calendar Year 2005 - 2006

COURSE & REGISTRATION	DATE	LOCATION	COURSE MANAGER
Homeland Security FY06 Application Workshop	April 25-27, 2006	Many Locations	Kary Schmidt kary.schmidt@nema.ne.gov
ICS 100, 200, 300 & 400 TTT (Train the Trainer)	May 16-19, 2006 (Brochure)	Lincoln, NE Havelock Socal Hall	Tami Freeman tami.freeman@nema.ne.gov
Advanced Academy	August 14-16, 2006 (Brochure Soon)	Lincoln, NE Havelock Socal Hall	DeWayne Morrow dewayne.morrow@nema.ne.gov
Basic Academy	August 14-18, 2006 (Brochure Soon)	Lincoln, NE Havelock Socal Hall	Seth Hyberger seth.hyberger@nema.ne.gov